The Fair of Donnybrook

By Laurence O'Dea

(*Read 2/12/57*)

The modern Fairs of Leipzig, Frankfurt, Pesth, Bergamo and Nijini-Novgorod, had their counterparts in the earlier centuries of this era. These earlier Fairs originally commenced on a Holy day or Saint's festival. The security guaranteed to the merchant, not only while the Fair lasted, but also while journeying to and from it, was a very useful supplement to the law of the land.

In some districts there was a regular succession of Fairs, which thus practically guaranteed, all the year round, freedom and security of transit. In France, for instance, in the Champagne country, in the twelfth century, there were six Fairs, extending over the whole year, and the money used at these Fairs, was a kind of International currency. One of these Fairs was at Troyes, and from this Fair were developed the Troy weights.

With the Norman Conquest of England, the European Fair came in its train, and developed when foreign merchants were regularly passing to and fro, under the protection of the Norman Kings. One of the most famous of these English Fairs was at Stourbridge, near Cambridge, established by Charter of King John in 1211, and another was that of Saint Bartholomew, held at Smithfield, in London and supressed in the same year as Donnybrook, and for the same reason. It was only natural, therefore, that a similar situation should follow the Norman invasion of this country.

Fair Founded.—In the year 1204, John, King of England, granted by letter, a licence to his Justiciary, directing him to build a castle at Dublin and at the same time authorising the holding of a Fair at Donnybrook and Fairs at three other points in the country. King John's letter in contracted Latin used in the Royal courts, in the Close Roll of England, is preserved in the Tower of London, from where I procured a photograph of the original. The following is a translation:

> "The King, etc. to his beloved and faithful Meiler FitzHenry, Justiciary of Ireland, greeting. You have informed us that you have not a place where our treasure can be deposited with you, and because as well for this as for other necessary purposes, we should have a fortress at Dublin, we direct you that you cause a castle to be built there, in such a place as shall seem to you most suitable for the government of the City, and if necessary for its defence, as strongly as you can, with good ditches and strong walls, and that, in the first instance, you make a tower where the castle and bawn and other appurtenances, may most conveniently be erected. And this we have commanded you, that you should take poundage fees for this purpose as you have written us, and that for the present, you should take 300 marks from Geoffrey FitzRobert, which he owes us. We have also commanded our citizens of Dublin by letters patent, that they fortify their City; and you, if they be unwilling, must compel them to do so.
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> We WILL also, that there be a Fair at Donniburn (Donnybrook) annually to continue for eight days on the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross; another at the Bridge of Saint John the Baptist, likewise for eight days, allowing them the like stallage and tolls; another at Waterford on the feast of St. Peter in Chains, for eight days, another at Limerick, on the feast of St. Martin, for eight days, and we command you that you cause it to be thus done, and proclamation made, that all merchants should come thither willingly.
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> Witnessed at Geydinton 31st day August."

The Bridge of St. John the Baptist.—In connection with this letter, I note that Sir John Gilbert says " outside the City wall, on the southern side of Rochel Street (Back Lane) between the New Gate and St. Nicholas Gate, was the place where the citizens conformably to the grant of John in 1204

used to hold their annual Fairs, which commenced on the anniversary of the discovery of the Holy Cross and continued for eight days."

In Strangway's composite map of Dublin, dated 1904, he shows a Fair Green outside the walls of Dublin to the south-west of the New Gate and adjoining the grounds of St. Francis' Abbey, and this Fair Green bears the date 1204. I could not find any published account by Strangway of his map, but I did find that at a distance of a few hundred yards on the north side of the road from the New Gate in the city walls (near Francis Street leading to Kilmainham, there stood the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, erected by Ailred the Palmer about the year 1188, on the sites now occupied by the Augustinian Church of St. John the Baptist, and the Distillery of Messrs. John Power and Son.

To return, however, to our main theme. King John sent a further letter dated 23rd August, 1214, the translation of which is as follows:

> *Grant Confirmed.*—" The King to the Lord Archbishop of Dublin, etc. Know ye that we have granted to our citizens of Dublin, that they shall have within their bounds, where they shall think expedient, a Fair for eight days, beginning on the day of the Invention of the Holy Cross. Therefore, we command you that this Fair, with all liberties and free customs to such a Fair belonging, you shall permit them to enjoy."

In a further letter dated 1215, King John confirmed the right of the citizens to hold the Fair, but extended the period to fifteen days, and saving to the Archbishop of Dublin, the said Fair for two days, that is the vigil and the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross.

Date Changed.—On 28th May, 1252, King Henry III, by Charter, confirmed all the rights that his father, King John had granted to the citizens of Dublin, for holding a Fair for fifteen days, but changed the date to the 7th July, the feast of the translation of St. Thomas the Martyr (St. Thomas a Becket). By a Charter of King Edward I, dated 27th June, 1280, the time for opening the Fair was further changed, at the instance of the citizens, and for their greater convenience, as stated in the document, to the feast of the translation of St. Benedict, Abbot, 10th July. A later Charter further altered the date of the Fair to the 26th August and fifteen days there from. Although some title on the part of the Archbishop of Dublin, to two out of the fifteen days, during which the Fair was to last, is alluded to in some of the later Charters, there is no trace on record of it ever having been exercised.

Trading Centre.—For centuries this Fair at Donnybrook was the most important live-stock and produce market in the country, and had a long and respectable history. It ranked with the great Fairs of Europe as a trading centre.

Gilbert lists the chief commodities of Fairs and markets of that period as, corn, cattle and their products. Honey, salmon, herrings, eels, oysters, lampreys, mulwell and stockfish, salted and fresh hides. Skins of horses, oxen, sheep, lamb, deer, wolf, marten, otter, squirrel, wild-cat, hare and rabbit. Silk and cloth of gold. English, Irish and foreign cloth; linen, canvas, cordwain. Various metals, horse trappings, coal, timber, glass, oils and colours, fruits and seeds. To Donnybrook to ply their crafts among the dealers of all these articles, came the Guildsmen of Dublin, the Physicians and Apothecaries, the Goldsmiths and the money dealers from Florence and Lucca, who had set up trading establishments in Dublin.

The Ballad singers have commemorated it in the following lines:

The mason does come with his line and his plumb,
The sawyer and carpenter, brothers in chips.
There are carvers and gilders and all sorts of builders
With soldiers from barracks and sailors from ships.
There's confectioners, cooks and printers of books,
There stampers of linen and weavers repair.
There widows and maids and all sorts of trades,
Go join in the humours of Donnybrook Fair.

Side by side with the commercial Fair, a fun or pleasure fair sprang up, and as the importance of the former dwindled with the growth of improved methods of travel and trading, the pleasure fair began to assume the leading role at Donnybrook, and so another verse of the ballad runs:

There's tinkers and nailers and beggars and tailors,
And singers of ballads and girls of the sieve.
With Barrack street rangers, the known ones and strangers
And many that no one can tell how they live.
There's horsemen and walkers and likewise fruit hawkers,
And swindlers the devil himself that would dare.
With pipers and fiddlers and dandies and diddlers
All set in the humours of Donnybrook Fair.

Grant to Ussher.—By the opening years of the last decade of the seventeenth century, the commercial Fair had become of little or no importance, and so about 1697, the Corporation of Dublin, no longer finding it worth while to collect tolls and fees, conveyed the right of holding the Fair at Donnybrook, to the Ussher family. I could not directly confirm this piece of information furnished by Blacker, in his *Sketches of Donnybrook Parish*, but in the *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, under date 23rd February, 1698, I found that the City Council, to enable it to raise a sum of twelve hundred and fifty pounds sterling, to pay a debt, ordered a Bond under the City seal, and a mortgage for the same on the revenues of, amongst other properties named, certain lands in Donnybrook set to Sir William Ussher.

Grant to Catherine Downes.—In 1748, Henry Ussher granted several denominations of land at Donnybrook, together with the Green, to a Catherine Downes (mother of the first Lord Downes, of whom we shall hear later) in fee, excepting and reserving unto the said Henry Ussher, his heirs and assigns, the benefit and profit of holding the yearly Fair in the usual places.

Grant by Wolseley to Madden.—On the death of Henry Ussher in 1756, the right of holding the Donnybrook Fair became vested in Sir William Wolseley, Baronet, who in 1778 made a lease thereof to Joseph Madden of Donnybrook, and by an " indenture made 6th March, 1812, between Sir Wm. Wolseley, of the City of London, Baronet (heir-at-law of Henry Ussher) of the one part and John Madden (son of the aforementioned Joseph) of Donnybrook in the County of Dublin, Esquire, of the other part, the said Sir William Wolseley, for and in consideration of the sum of £750 to him in hand paid by the said John Madden" disposed absolutely of his right to the tolls and customs of Donnybrook Fair.

Tolls payable.—The following is the " List of Tolls and Customs paid or payable at the Fair of Donnybrook, pursuant to Charter :—" For every horse, mare, mule, gelding or ass sold, 6d.; for every ditto, swopped or exchanged, 6d. each; for every cow, bullock or bull sold, 4d.; for every ditto two years old, 3d.; for every ditto one year old sold, 2d.; for every sheep, pig or calf sold, 1d.; Hawkers pay according to the articles they have to sell, from 2d. to 1/-.; Standings according to the ground they occupy from 6d. to 3/-."

Site of Fair.—I think it is appropriate at this point to tell you whereabouts in Donnybrook, the Fair was held. The site I have shewn on a map, which is an enlarged copy of a map attached to deeds of 1726 and 1749, in connection with Balinguile House, Donnybrook, and which is still in existence.

From this map, you will see that the Fair Green was on both sides of what is now the main road and bridge over the Dodder (the bridge having been erected in 1832 with the main road).

The Green on the left-hand side now houses the Bective Rangers Rugby Football Club, while the Ever Ready Garage buildings, occupy the site of the Green on the right-hand side.

I have been fortunate in securing a photostat of an original drawing of Donnybrook Fair, from the collection of Mrs. A. M. Hall, who with her husband, wrote *Ireland, its Scenery and Character*. This collection is in the National Library.

Description of Fair.—For a description of the Donnybrook tents and their wares, I take the following pen picture from Sir Jonah Barrington's *Personal Sketches* :

" Tents built on wattles and then covered with quilts, winnowing sheets, sacks ripped open, rugs, blankets, etc., everything in fact was expended in the bed line (few neighbours using that accommodation during the Fair) and recourse often had to womens' apparel, as old petticoats, praskeens, etc. When all was secured—a very tall wattle with the hairy end of a sweeping brush, a cast-off lantern, rags of all colours made into streamers, and fixed at the top by way of sign, formed the invitation to drinking. And when eating was likewise to be had, a rusty tin saucepan, or piece of broken iron pot was hung dangling in front, to crown the entrance and announce good cheer.

" As to furniture, down the centre, doors old or new (whichever were handy to be lifted, were stretched from one end to the other, resting on hillocks of clay, dug from underneath, and so forming a capital table, with an agreeable variety, both as to breadth and elevation. Similar constructions for benches were placed along the sides, but not so steady as the tables, so that when the liquor got the mastery of one convivial fellow, he would fall off and the whole row generally following his example. The tent was then cleared out, and prepared for a new company of shillelagh boys."

Food.—The *Dublin Warder* of 30th August, 1823 gives the following description of the victuals offered to hungry clients :

" On one table were sirloins, ribs, rounds, flanks, shins, briskets and houghs of beef. On another, fillets, legs and cutlets de veau. Six dozen of boiled chickens smoked on the same board with eight and twenty wicklow hams. Kishes of potatoes, carts of bread and gallons of punch, completed the hospitable board, while the joyous faces of the partakers, adorned the spectacle."

Side Shows.—The same paper takes note of the entertainment offered by the various side-shows :

" Browne's Circus rivals Browne's Theatre of Arts. An Italian without hands, offers to prove his skill in handicraft, sleight-of-hand, and palmistry. He is little more than three feet in height—challenges a trial of strength with giants of seven feet, and a delicate female promises to excel the strongest coal-porter, by raising two hundred-weights with her flowing ringlets.

" Attracted by the name of a French company of comedians, a tolerable number of persons assembled to witness the representations there, which were—a dance of savages in nearly absolute ' querpo '—a Russian dwarf—a pasteboard representation of His Majesty's Coronation and Voila ! All over in ten minutes, when to make way for a fresh auditory, the booth was cleared."

And here again the ballad maker gives his version of the picture.

'Tis there are dogs dancing, and wild beasts a prancing,
With neat bits of painting in red, yellow and gold ;
Toss players and scramblers, and showmen and gamblers,
Pickpockets in plenty, both of young and of old.
There are brewers and bakers, and jolly shoemakers,
With butchers and porters, and men that cut hair.
There are mountebanks grinning, while others are sinning,
To keep up the humours of Donnybrook Fair.

Riots begin.—The fact that reports of an undesirable character concerning the Fair, began to make their appearance subsequent to the relinquishing of their rights by the Corporation of Dublin, in 1697, is purely fortuitous. No published reports about the conduct of the Fair, can be found prior to the year 1729, but reading the news-sheets from that time onwards, one is made aware, that riots were a customary feature of the annual Fair.

The *Dublin Intelligence* of 23rd August, 1729, states " The annual Fair suppressed by order of our Lord Mayor, Sir Peter Verdoen, to prevent the

usual riots there." And in 1751 we find the *Dublin Weekly Journal* giving the following report: "On Saturday, the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Ald. Thomas Taylor, attended by the Sheriffs and constables, went to Donnybrook Fair and ordered all the tents to be pulled down; and on Sunday went to the same place, attended by the picquet-guard, where the Ormond and Liberty rioters had assembled, in order to disperse those inconsiderate wretches, who by their vile proceedings, are a pest of society and a scandal to the human species."

The Fair, however, seemed to alternate with good reports and those not so good, and Barrington is probably correct in his sketch which he wrote concerning his visit to the Fair about the year 1790, because the *Dublin Chronicle* of 4th September, 1792, reads: "By the vigilance of the magistrates, all the tents were struck by Sunday last at Donnybrook, and much disorder and riot prevented," and earlier, in 1773 to be exact, the *Freeman's Journal* had this to say: "We have the pleasure of acquainting the public that notwithstanding the crowds of every kind assembled on Sunday last at Donnybrook Fair, there happened not the least riot or other disturbance, contrary to the expectations of many, who have not forgot the dreadful accidents to which that place is particularly liable, especially on Sundays, during the annual Fair. What this extraordinary good behaviour is owing to, cannot be immediately accounted for; but as 'one swallow makes no summer' so unusual a calm, should not slacken the care of our magistrates, who, from the experience of former years, have reason still to be prepared for any sudden occasion."

And for that again, from *Faulkners Dublin Journal* 3rd September, 1799, we learn "We are sorry to observe that the magistrates of Dublin are so inattentive to its peace, as to suffer the continuance of that annual nuisance, Donnybrook Fair, so many days beyond the time for which it has unfortunately, a legal claim to exist. . . . The Fair continued until yesterday, and will probably last until it shall grow into such an enormity of riot and outrage as shall cure itself."

In 1802 Hely Dutton in his *Observations on Archer's Statistical Survey of the County of Dublin*" says: "Donnybrook Fair has been long complained of as a nuisance, and a most dangerous one it is . . . the scenes of riot and drunkenness that take place there, are most disgusting, and can surely answer no purpose, but to put money in the pockets of publicans, at the expense of the morals and health of the people. I sincerely hope to see it abolished before next meeting, and a compensation made to the proprietor of the tolls, which could be easily adjusted." But over fifty years were to elapse before his hope was fulfilled.

In 1824, Messrs. John and Peter Madden of Donnybrook, urged on the Lord Mayor, Alderman Richard Smyth, that they had a right to continue the Fair for fifteen days, including Sundays. That they had on several occasions, conceded one Sunday to the wishes of the Chief Magistrate, and were willing to do so in this instance, but denied his Lordships' authority to interfere. The Lord Mayor contended that they could have no such right, the law of these realms being most explicit and decided as to the observance of the Sabbath; and he considered occurrences that had of recent years, taken place there, and of which, he himself was cognizant, to be a national disgrace, and that he should be ever reproachable, if he did not do all in his power to counteract their recurrence; that such proceedings were frightful in their consequences, and most abominable in their nature, destructive of the best interests of society, and most fatal to the peace and happiness of the humbler classes. Messrs. Madden failed to induce his Lordship to forego his determination of not allowing booths or tents to remain standing during Sunday, and they addressed a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, but he replied "The Lord Mayor is the proper magistrate to take care of the public peace and morals within his jurisdiction, and that there can be no doubt that his Lordship will exercise these duties, in this instance, as he had on all other occasions, with propriety and discretion."

The *Dublin Warder* of 28th August, 1824, pays the following tribute to

Lord Mayor Smyth. "We understand that the Lord Mayor has not received any sum whatever in his office, from the tent holders at Donnybrook Fair, and the amount paid for licences for public exhibitions, it appears his Lordship has handed to the Mendicity Institution. This is consistent with his Lordship's demeanour during his term of office."

Thomas Crofton Croker in his volume of *Popular Songs of Ireland* in his introduction to the ballad "The Humours of Donnybrook Fair" gives the following account of a visit paid to the Fair by a foreigner, one Prince Puckler Muskau on the 29th August, 1828: "I rode out again to-day, for the first time, to see the Fair at Donnybrook, near Dublin, which is a kind of popular festival. Nothing, indeed, can be more national! The poverty, the dirt, and the wild tumult, were as great as the glee and merriment with which the cheapest pleasures were enjoyed. I saw things eaten and drunk with delight, which forced me to turn my head quickly away, to remain master of my disgust. Heat and dust, crowd and stench (il faut le dire) made it impossible to stay longer; but these do not annoy the natives. There were many hundred tents, all ragged like the people, and adorned with tawdry rags instead of flags; many contented themselves with a cross on a hoop. . . . The lowest sort of rope-dancers and posture-masters exercised their toilsome vocation on stages of planks, and dressed in shabby finery, dancing and grimacing in the dreadful heat till they were completely exhausted. A third part of the public lay or rather rolled about drunk; others ate, screamed, shouted and fought. . . . My reverence for truth compels me to add, that not the slightest trace of English brutality was to be perceived; they were more like French people, though their gaiety was mingled with more humour, and more genuine good-nature; both of which are national traits of the Irish, and are always doubled by poteen (the best sort of whisky, illicitly distilled)."

Writing in the 1840's Mrs. A. M. Hall (mentioned earlier) says: "Although the Irishman is no longer there in his glory, tents are still annually 'pitched' upon the sodden sward, where they have been erected for centuries, itinerant play-actors continue to gather there once a year; the beggars yet make it a place of rendezvous, lads and lasses assemble even now to dance under roofs of canvas; and the din of harsh music from the shows mingled with almost equally discordant squeakings of a score or two of bagpipes, still keep alive the memory of 'Donnybrook capers that bothered the vapours and drove away care.' In the autumn of last year we were curious to ascertain the difference between Donnybrook of yesterday and that of to-day, and prepared as we had been for the wonderful changes which a few eventful years have wrought in the habits of the people, it was with utter astonishment we noted the contrast between the reckless 'devilry' of a former time, and the decent hilarity of the present. We entered the Fair twice—at mid-day and again the evening, a short time before the sports terminated on the order of the magistrates. We saw, indeed, crowds of people amusing themselves, the merry-go-rounds and hobby-horses crammed, the shows thronged and several tents filled with dancers and gossipers, but of scenes which the German tourist honours with the term 'National' we beheld literally none. We heard nothing and noticed nothing that could offend the most scrupulous; there was no quarrel approaching to a brawl, we did not encounter a single intoxicated person of either sex, and the next day our inquiries from a competent authority as to the amount of charges at the Police Offices, incident to the Fair, were answered by the expressive word 'NIL.'"

Notwithstanding Mrs. Hall's report and the fact that the *Freemans Journal* of 1847 said that "The Fair was a spiritless one in every sense of the word" Donnybrook had acquired an unenviable reputation, as a result of the questionable conduct carried on over the years at the Fair. In the words of the Most Rev. Dr. Donnelly, Bishop of Canea, "it degenerated into a wild and reckless gathering of a multitude, devoted to all manner of unrighteousness."

Fair Suppressed.—The moment was ripe for the final and complete suppression of the Fair, and the moment found the man for the job. In the

year 1853 Rev. P. J. Nowlan was appointed Catholic curate of Donnybrook, and he was instrumental in organising public opinion for the suppression and abolition of the Fair. Efforts had been repeatedly made to this end. Lord Mayor Smyth in 1824, had succeeded in having the Fair closed down on Sundays, but now all classes and creeds joined in a determined agitation to have it abolished finally.

No one went into the struggle more thoroughly or more perseveringly than Fr. Nowlan. He addressed meetings, he helped on committees, he indited letters and newspaper articles, and waited single-handed on Protestant, Presbyterian and Catholic alike, to solicit contributions towards extinguishing the Patent rights of the Fair, and his efforts were rewarded when on the 14th May, 1855 a meeting convened by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Joseph Boyce, was held in the Mansion House for the purpose of considering the propriety of taking steps to abolish the annual Fair held at Donnybrook. Amongst those present were the Marquis of Westmeath, Very Rev. Dr. Spratt, O.C.C., Rev. P. J. Nowlan, C.C., Alderman George Roe, Alderman Hoyte, J. E. Vernon, Esq., Jas. Haughton, Esq., E. Wright, Esq., LL.D.

The Lord Mayor said " Now for the first time since the Charter of King John, under which the Fair was established, was it in the power of the citizens to abolish it for a small amount of money. The present patentees of the Fair were anxious to dispose of their title ; the matter had been enquired into by legal persons, and it was ascertained that it was within the power of the patentees to dispose of their interest in the Fair." He continued " In the year 1842, Messrs. Madden, the patentees, required £6,000 for their interest. They said that considering what the Fair was then worth (reputed to be £400 annually) they would not be doing justice to their families in taking less than that amount. They were now satisfied to take £3,000 for it, but they would not consent to dispose of it for a smaller sum." The reason for the smaller sum asked was because the sum of the tolls and charges had dropped to about £120 annually. A Committee of thirty-six was formed and I noted in addition to those above-mentioned the names of such citizens as J. Sibthorpe, Esq., Rev. Maurice Day and of course Rev. B. H. Blacker.

A subscription list was opened, and before the close of the meeting, the Lord Mayor announced that one-twelfth of the sum required had there and then been subscribed. Amongst subsequent donations I noted the following: E. Wright, Esq., £100, Rt. Hon. Sidney Herbert, M.P., £100, Messrs. A. Guinness, Son & Co. Ltd., £50, Lord Palmerston, £50, W. Dargan, Esq., £50, Messrs. A. Findlater & Co., £10. By 25th July, the sum of £1,795 had been collected, and by 3rd September, the subscription list totalled, £2,077, and a Mrs. Catherine Warren, widow of a former Lord Mayor, Alderman Samuel Warren, and owner of considerable property in the neighbourhood, contributed £1,000 to the fund, thus ensuring to the Committee, the full sum required.

The Committee did not have to wait, however, until the full sum was subscribed before the patentees honoured their agreement, because the *Freemans Journal* of 25th August, 1855, carried this notice :—

ABOLITION OF DONNYBROOK FAIR.

In consequence of the Abolition of Donnybrook Fair, the Commissioners of Police hereby give notice, that in pursuance of the powers vested in them, they will not permit any hackney car stand in any of the streets of Donnybrook, or in any place adjacent thereto. No crowd or assemblage of persons, or hackney cars will be allowed to congregate or remain on the Green, or cause obstruction of Public Thoroughfares in or contiguous to the village of Donnybrook. All public-houses will be visited by the Police and restricted to legal hours.

By Order,

Richard M. Ardagh, *Secretary*.

Metropolitan Police Office. 23rd August, 1855.

The Deed surrendering the patent for holding the Fair was signed on 17th September, 1855 by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Joseph Boyce and Edward Wright, Esq. LL.D., on behalf of the Committee and by Peter Madden, Eleanor Madden, Mary Madden and others on behalf of the patentees. Registration took place on 25th September, 1855.

All the respectable citizens of Dublin rejoiced at the abolition and suppression of Donnybrook Fair, and on 13th August, 1855, Father Mathew, the famous temperance advocate, sent a letter of rejoicing and thanks to the daily press.

A week later the newspapers published a circular letter from the Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr. Cullen to the clergy of Dublin, approving of the abolition of the Fair.

The Police Magistrate Frank Thorpe Porter writing about the Fair said "It would be almost impossible to describe the scenes of drunkenness, violence, gambling, and gross indecency that characterised an entire week in the month of August, every year whilst 'The Brook' afforded its immoral attractions, causing our prisons to be filled with loose, disorderly or dishonest characters, so as to resemble hospitals in a locality suddenly visited by an epidemic or contagious distemper. I do not believe that Donnybrook Fair was ever held without being the direct or indirect cause of a life or lives being lost. From the time I attained the police magistracy in 1841 until 1855, I had to deal with an ample share of the charges and summonses, arising from the annual nuisance of Donnybrook Fair; and *I must admit that in disposing of drunken or disorderly cases, I was often influenced by the consideration, that when such an annual abomination was tolerated in a civilised community, it was a ground for slightly mitigating the punishments incurred by yielding to its abundant temptations.*"

The *Freemans Journal* of the 28th August, 1855, carried in its editorial the following passages :—" Let the corporate and other bodies remember, when they rail against Donnybrook, that Donnybrook was not made what it was by the people. If Donnybrook had been left altogether to the artizans, their wives and their sons and daughters, it would not have been the sink of pollution, which it too notoriously has been. The vices of Donnybrook resulted not from the presence of the children of toil, but from the advantage taken of them by the viciously disposed, of the upper stratum of society, who watched for their prey, and pounced on it, in the moment of unguarded weakness.

Let us hope then, that as the wealthy made the 'brook' what it was, they will provide for the poorest citizens a substitute for that which they were coerced, by a sense of duty, to abolish."

Fair Revived.—But though the patent was purchased and safely vested in the Committee, their expectations were not immediately realised for in the same issue of the *Freemans Journal* of 25th Augur, 1855, side by side with the Official Police Notice already mentioned, there appeared the following advertisement :

DONNYBROOK FAIR

" As the owner of the Green has refused letting same for the usual holding of the Fair thereon, for the accommodation of the public. I beg to say that I have ample accommodation on the adjoining Green, the greater portion of which, I have already let to respectable parties for Theatres, Exhibitions, Standings, etc. An early application is necessary, as I hope to give as good satisfaction as my deceased uncle, John Madden. As there has been no act preventing the sale of cattle, it will be held as usual.

Signed by order of the Committee.
JOSEPH DILLON."

This field which was thus advertised, is also shewn on the same map of the Fair Green, and is marked as 'Joseph Dillon's field 1852' and it now

houses the Donnybrook Lawn Tennis Club. The name Joseph Dillon appears in the Dublin street directories, up to and including the year 1860, as a grocer residing in the parish of St. Mary, Donnybrook, yet it was with a Miss Eliza Dillon, that the Police had dealings. I must therefore assume that Miss Eliza Dillon was trading as 'Joseph Dillon.'

The Dillon field, had, according to Police reports, one hundred and eighty-four tents and booths—there were three or four for the sale of sweets, cakes and toys, and a standing for crubeens and the like—the remainder were for the sale of liquor.

Final Suppression.—The Police Authorities had endeavoured, between the years 1855 and 1859 to circumvent Miss Dillon, but without avail. Success, however, was to crown the efforts of that very patient Police Officer, Inspector Rigney, when Miss Dillon was obliged to seek renewal of her publican's license in November 1859, and the renewal was opposed by the Police Authorities.

The case was heard in the College Street Police Office. On 8th November, 1859, Police Magistrates Stronge and McDermott, who had heard the case, sat for the purpose of giving their decision. The judgment was a fairly lengthy one and I give only the salient points from it. Mr. Stronge said the present case had come before them as an application for a certificate from the magistrates, which was necessary for a renewal of the licence to sell wines and spirits. It was to the effect that the publichouse was well conducted and that the owner was a person of good character. Miss Eliza Dillon was the applicant and her application was opposed by Mr. McMahon, Superintendent of 'E' Division of Police.

It appeared that the present applicant had set up or renewed the Fair upon a new site. In this field on 21st August last she caused booths to be erected, in which spirits and other drink was sold during the week up to the 28th August.

It was stated by Inspector Rigney, that this place was frequented during the week by persons of the very worst character, and in fact, it was a scene of riot and disorder from an early hour in the morning until eleven at night, when the booths closed. It was filled by a disorderly rabble—persons were assaulted, hats knocked off, and other riotous and improper conduct took place, that a large number of persons were intoxicated or partially under the influence of liquor; and it was also proved that no animals had been sold, with the exception of two donkeys, which were purchased by Miss Dillon, and that no business was transacted beyond the sale of spirits, by and on the part of the applicant.

It was contended by the applicant that the field was not included in the house and premises for which she had a licence. It was not hard to show that the field was included in the licence, for in the year 1856, twenty-three summonses had been brought before the magistrates, and Miss Dillon was then examined and stated that the defendants had been employed by her, that the sale of spirits for which they were summoned had been carried on by her directions and that the spirits belonged to her. On these grounds the summonses had been dismissed, the Bench holding that the licence applied to the field. They were now asked to decide that the field was not included in the premises covered by the licence.

Mr. Stronge said that the applicant argued that for the sale of spirits, the licence extended to the field, but that for the riot and disorder which took place, she was not to be held responsible. Mr. Stronge concluded that he believed that during the past year Miss Dillon's publichouse had not been conducted in a manner which would warrant him in granting the certificate, and under the circumstances, would refuse the application. Mr. McDermott briefly expressed his concurrence with the decision of his brother magistrate, and his opinion that the field might be legally included in the house and premises, for which the licence was granted. He referred to the interpretation clause for the purpose of showing that the licensed place must not necessarily be covered in or roofed, and to the evidence which had been given by the Crown, and which amply proved the evils of the so-called fair.

Thus after six hundred and fifty-one years of Chartered fair and a further four unauthorised years, Donnybrook Fair was suppressed—but the story does not end at this point. The final scene may be regarded as an epilogue.

New Church.—The old Catholic Chapel in Donnybrook, had been erected in 1787, in the village graveyard, on a site secured from Lord Downes. It adjoined the then police barracks in Donnybrook, and in the several building extensions that took place in the police station, the back wall of the church had of necessity to be moved inwards, and in the end the chapel became too small for the demands made upon it. But there was another motive for a new Church, which powerfully influenced the Pastor, Very Rev. Dean O'Connell, D.D. and his indefatigable curate, Fr. Nowlan. That was that some expiatory monument was necessary in the neighbourhood, to atone for the unholy orgies, intemperance and riotousness, annually indulged in at Donnybrook Fair, and that a Church was the proper form for such a monument to assume.

The site desired was that on which the present Church stands. It overlooked the Fair Green, and on the 12th June, 1863, the foundation stone of the Church of the Sacred Heart was blessed and laid by His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr. Cullen. The Architects were Messrs. Pugin and Ashlin (now Ashlin and Coleman) and the contractor was Mr. Michael Meade, whose house, St. Michael's, Ailesbury Road, the Society visited during the past Summer Session. The opening ceremony was fixed for the 26th August, 1866. It was in many ways a memorable event. It was the old Fair day, but an exceptional brilliancy was added to the ceremonies, by the presence of the first Cardinal in Ireland's history, His Eminence, Paul, Cardinal Cullen.

That concludes my story of Donnybrook Fair from its inception to its abolition. I would like to acknowledge the great help I received in the compilation of my paper from the following :—

My fellow-members Mr. James Scully for placing at my disposal his note-books on Donnybrook Fair, compiled by him over a long period. Mr. Flynn for his information on the workings of the Committee for the Abolition of the Fair. Mr. Leopold Batt for calling my attention to Strangeway's composite map of Dublin and its Fair Green A.D. 1204. The Gardai at Donnybrook for their willing help in attempting to locate various landmarks for me. Mr. Glynn and staff of the Gilbert Library, Pearse St. The Staff of the National Library and in particular, Mr. Breen, who was most helpful in bringing me valuable information both in maps and journals. And lastly but by no means, least, Mr. Meehan our Hon. Secretary.

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